

SOCY.01.2 The President's

~~MISTRESS~~

P. ANDERSON, Patrick

The President's Mistress

By Patrick Anderson.
319 pp. New York:
Simon and Schuster. \$8.95.

By DAN WAKEFIELD

In a more innocent time than ours it was said that the surest way to best-sellerdom was to write a book called "The President's Doctor's Dog." A more likely version of the old formula today might be "The President's Mistress's Perversion." Patrick Anderson has stopped short of the "Perversion," but in "The President's Mistress" he has produced what should prove to be a highly popular light entertainment—a mystery wrapped in contemporary-sounding political intrigue, spiced mildly with sex and relieved now and then with wry humor and astute observation.

The focus of the story is Washington, during the Administration of President Charles Whitmore, set in a fictionalized time period that seems to be about a year in the future. The hero is young lawyer Ben Norton, a former friend and campaigner for Whitmore who left his cause disillusioned (as who wouldn't be?) when the girl he wanted to marry brushed him off to have an affair with the President. The girl is killed off early in the book, and the plot revolves around Norton's attempt to solve the murder and the Administration's efforts to cover it up.

Dan Wakefield's latest novel is "Starting Over."

In Ben's search to find whodunit he is aided and/or thwarted by such stock types as the hard-driving investigative reporter with the frayed collar and ketchup-stained khaki pants, the corporation-man White House troubleshooter who is grateful for "some first-rate input," the sophisticated society hostess who climbs her way up on the beds of aging Congressmen, the former C.I.A. man gone berserk with his personal stockpile of hidden cameras, bugging devices and wigs for all occasions.

The author has made this cast of familiar types quite credible, as he has the Washington background they move against. He also derives some satirical fun from present and recently-past political figures. A wise old retired Senator explains to the young hero that all politicians would cut your throat, but they all would have different styles of doing it. For instance: "Hubert, he'd have cried about how terrible it was that he had to do it to you, until you'd have been begging him to go on and get it over with. Lyndon, he'd have made a big sloppy speech about how it was all for your own good. . . ."

Without insulting one's intelligence, "The President's Mistress" provides an entertaining diversion from the latest catastrophes of the political news. Isn't that the mark of a good mistress? ■